ACTFL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES 3 MODES OF COMMUNICATION

The ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Performance Guidelines are “performance standards” that describe the language proficiency of language learners in Standards-based language programs, how well students demonstrate competencies, “how well should students be expected to do the what from the content standards”. These guidelines are organized according to the three Modes of Communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational) and provide an organizing principle and a view of language that reflects real communication.

1. INTERPERSONAL MODE

• The Interpersonal Mode is characterized by active negotiation of meaning among individuals. Participants observe and monitor one another to see how their meaning and intentions are being communicated. Adjustments and clarifications can be made accordingly. As a result, there is a higher probability of ultimately achieving the goal of successful communication in this mode than in the other two modes. The Interpersonal Mode is most obvious in conversation, but both the interpersonal and negotiated dimensions can be realized through reading and writing, such as the exchange of personal letters or electronic mail messages.

1. INTERPRETIVE MODE
   * The Interpretive Mode is focused on the appropriate cultural interpretation of meanings that occur in written and spoken form where there is no recourse to the active negotiation of meaning with the writer or the speaker. Such instances of “one-way” reading or listening include the cultural interpretation of texts, oral or written, must be distinguished from the notion of reading and listening “comprehension,” where the term could refer to understanding a text with an American mindset. Put another way, interpretation differs from comprehension in that the former implies the ability to “read (or listen) between the lines.”
   * Since the Interpretive Mode does not allow for active negotiation between the reader and the writer or the listener and the speaker, it requires a much more profound knowledge of culture from the outset. The more one knows about the other language and culture, the greater the chances of creating the appropriate cultural interpretations of a written or spoken text. It must be noted, however, that cultural literacy and the ability to read or listen between the lines are developed over time and through exposure to the language and culture.
2. PRESENTATIONAL MODE

• The Presentational Mode refers to the creation of messages in a manner that facilities interpretation by members of the other culture where no direct opportunity for active negotiation of meaning between members of the two cultures exists. Examples of the “one-way” writing and speaking require a substantial knowledge of language and culture from the outset, since the goal is to make sure that members of the other culture, the audience, will be successful in reading and listening between the lines.

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